



## Memorandum

To: State Referee Administrators  
State Youth Referee Administrators  
State Directors of Referee Instruction  
State Directors of Referee Assessment  
National Referee Instructors and Trainers  
National Assessors  
National Referees

From: Alfred Kleinaitis  
Manager of Referee Development and Education

**Subject: Automatic Suspension Following an Expulsion from a Match**

Date: November 14, 2003

FIFA recently distributed Circular 866 to clarify and confirm any doubts remaining from its earlier Circular (821, dated October 1, 2002) regarding the issue of mandatory suspensions for a player who has been expelled from a match. The clarifications took the form of unambiguous answers to certain frequently asked questions.

1. Any player sent off during a football match shall automatically be suspended for the following match (Art. 19, para. 4; Art. 39 FDC)
  2. Any appeal against an automatic suspension shall not have a suspensive effect. Under no circumstances may a player take part in the following match while awaiting a decision on his appeal, regardless of the reasons for his appeal.
  3. Any appeals against an automatic suspension as a result of an obvious error made by the referee under the terms of Art. 83 FDC (principally an error regarding the identify of a player involved in an incident leading to a sending off) can and must be accepted or rejected immediately in order to allow any players who have been erroneously suspended to play in the next match.
  4. The disciplinary body is able to reach an immediate decision with regard to such an appeal as obvious errors, by their very nature, can also be confirmed without delay. If any doubts remain, the referee has clearly not made an obvious error and the appeal will also be rejected immediately.
- We therefore ask the national associations of FIFA to make use of the judicial instruments referred to in the FIFA Disciplinary Code (Art. 134 and 140) in order to be able to make an immediate decision regarding appeals: either allow the disciplinary body to hold an immediate conference or permit a single judge to pronounce a decision.

5. If a player is unable to serve the automatic suspension in a domestic or continental club competition, the relevant bodies shall decide on how the suspension shall be carried over to another competition.
6. The principle of automatic suspension shall be applied in the same way, irrespective of the offence committed by the player.  
However, in the case of particularly serious offences, the relevant body may extend the sanction imposed to apply to all competitions organised under its jurisdiction in order to prevent a player, after having committed such an offence, from playing in any other competition.

All competition authorities under USSF must ensure that their disciplinary procedures take these clarifications into consideration.

- A one game suspension is mandatory following a send-off (red card).
- The suspension may be extended for more serious offenses but it cannot be reduced, no matter what the reason was for the send-off.
- The suspension must be served even if it is being appealed. Under no circumstances can the fact of an appeal be used to suspend or delay the suspension.
- All appeals must be decided quickly, before the match is played for which the affected player would be suspended. If the send-off was erroneous due to an obvious error in identifying the player, this appeal can be resolved quickly because the error was obvious; if the error was not obvious, the appeal will be quickly resolved by rejecting it.